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City of Riverside

NEWS RELEASE

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CITY OF RIVERSIDE'S ILLEGAL DUMPING ORDINANCE YIELDS POSSIBLE SECOND FORFEITURE CASE

Riverside, CA--On October 9, 2003, the Riverside Police Aviation Unit monitored a call of illegal dumping taking place in Sycamore Highland Park. The helicopter crew responded and observed a white Ford F-700 dump truck on the park grounds filled with what appeared to be a load of dirt and rock. Several large piles of decomposed granite and dirt were strewn around the immediate area of the truck.

The police investigation determined that the operators of the truck did not seek and were not granted permission to enter the park site and had, in fact, gained entry to the parkland by driving over an improved curb. The City Attorney's Office plans to send a notice of forfeiture to the truck's registered and legal owners (identified as an out-of-state leasing company and bank) and the construction company operating the truck. The driver of the truck was cited for illegal dumping and driving on a suspended license.

City Attorney Greg Priamos stated, "One of our top priorities is to keep our city clean and beautiful, and our residents safe from the hazards posed by illegal dumping. The ordinance serves as an important deterrent to illegal dumping. Much of the illegal dumping occurs in our greenbelt and open spaces and it is critical that we preserve and protect these areas."

This is Riverside's second forfeiture case since an illegal dumping ordinance went into effect last February. The ordinance makes the dumping of any solid waste upon any land or waterway illegal, and gives the city the authority to seize the offending vehicle. Vehicles are then sold at public auction with the proceeds distributed between the Riverside Police Department and the City of Attorney's Office. Last March, a resident caught illegally dumping in Bradley Wash had his vehicle forfeited and sold at auction.

The ordinance has gained attention from other cities that are exploring the adoption of similar measures to curb illegal dumping problems. Most illegal dumping is done to avoid either disposal fees at landfills or the time and effort required for proper disposal. As Priamos continues, "What do you want to pay? \$23 for dumping fees at the landfill or do you want to buy a new truck? The City is taking this seriously. Not only does illegal dumping impact the aesthetics of our environment, but it poses a health hazard for the City's residents."

Illegal dumping can be dangerous. Many areas used for illegal dumping are easily accessible to children, who may be more susceptible to physical and chemical hazards present at many illegal dumpsites, especially since items illegally dumped might include construction and demolition waste, appliances, used oil, chemicals, medical and other hazardous waste. Illegally dumped debris may also attract rodents and insects. For example, discarded tires provide ideal breeding sites for mosquitoes. Illegal dumping in our washes and drainage canals can cause flooding during our seasonal rains when blocked by debris, and runoff from the dumps containing chemicals may contaminate wells and surface water used as sources of drinking water.

There is also a cost to local government associated with the continuous clearing of illegally dumped waste. The City of Riverside spends nearly \$200,000 per year on cleanup, hauling and disposal activities associated with illegal dumping. Last year alone, the City handled 1,752 cases of illegal dumping on private property, and disposed of 1,865 tons of illegally dumped waste. The City's ordinance helps the city pass the cost off to the illegal dumper, as opposed to the residents in the form of higher fees. More importantly, it is hoped that this ordinance will serve as a deterrent to illegal activity.

Residents who are witness to illegal dumping activity are encouraged to call the Police Department at 787-7911. Should a resident see what appears to be an illegal dump site, they can call 351-6127.

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